

WASHINGTON COUNTY COMMISSION
EMERGENCY MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 7, 2013

An Emergency Meeting of the Board of the Washington County Commission was called to order by Chairman James J. Eardley at 1:00 p.m. on October 7, 2013, in the Commission Chambers, Washington County Administration Building, St. George, Utah. Those in attendance were Chairman James J. Eardley, Commissioner Alan D. Gardner, Iron County Commissioners Dale Brinkerhoff and David Miller, Administrator Dean Cox, Deputy County Attorney Eric Clarke, and Deputy County Clerk Christine S. Hall.

Commissioner Dennis Drake called in to the meeting and participated via telephone.

AGENDA

CONSIDERATION OF PROCLAMATION DECLARING A STATE OF “LOCAL EMERGENCY” IN WASHINGTON COUNTY, UTAH, DUE TO THE ECONOMIC DISRUPTION ARISING OUT OF THE CLOSURE OF ZION NATIONAL PARK

Chairman Eardley said that there was a meeting earlier this morning to discuss the devastating financial impact of the closure of various national parks and other federally controlled properties in the State of Utah.

Commissioner Gardner said that eight (8) other Utah counties participated in this morning's meeting, either in person or by telephone, as well as Mohave and Coconino Counties in Arizona. The government shutdown which precipitated the closure of campgrounds and parks emphasizes the importance of returning these federal lands to county/state ownership. Many people have saved for and planned vacations in our state, only to be turned away. He urged passage of this emergency proclamation, as other counties across the state have done.

Mark Chambers, Councilmember from Springdale Town, said that there has been a dramatic impact on his town. At this time of year, there are typically ten thousand (10,000) or more visitors to Springdale, both domestic and foreign. This year, however, Springdale is a ghost town. Those who have arrived have been denied access to Zion National Park and are unable to visit Bryce, Canyonlands or the Grand Canyon. Many have cancelled their trips and reservations, which is impacting local hotels, restaurants, and shops. Tour buses cannot get through Zion because no escorts through the tunnel are available to them.

Iron County Commissioner Brinkerhoff said that in his county, a resolution has been passed to move forward on re-opening the federal facilities. He said that the federal employees are being compensated anyway, so they might as well be on the job. Commissioner Miller added that once the patterns of tourism are interrupted, the costs may be felt for years to come.

Ms. Roxie Sherwin of the Washington County Convention & Visitors Office echoed all of the sentiments expressed above. Further, this is just not impacting today and tomorrow; she wonders whether visitors in the future will feel comfortable booking future trips. If people have lost faith in a tourist relationship, they may decide to go elsewhere, resulting in substantial long-term economic harm to our state.

MOTION: Motion by Commissioner Gardner to Approve Passage of the Proclamation Declaring a State of “Local Emergency” in Washington County, Utah, Due to the Economic Disruption Arising out of the Closure of Zion National Park. Motion seconded by Commissioner Drake and carried by unanimous vote, with Commissioners Eardley, Gardner, and Drake voting aye.

There being nothing further to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 1:13 p.m.

CHRISTINE S. HALL
DEPUTY CLERK

JAMES J. EARDLEY
CHAIRMAN